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## **Position Statement On Measuring Success**

Adopted September 13, 2000

The State Board of Education defines successful students as those who can read, write, compute, think creatively, solve problems and use technology. All students should also enjoy and perform in the arts and athletics and understand history, science and other cultures and languages. Each student must be responsible for his or her learning and behavior, work well with and be helpful to others, and contribute to the community. Every student must graduate from high school and be prepared to move on to productive work and further study and to function in the global economy. Ultimately, students must become active citizens and lifelong learners who lead healthy lives.

We can meet our responsibility of providing an educational experience that achieves these goals only if we regularly and consistently assess how well our students are doing and make the changes that are necessary in order to improve all facets of our schools.

### **Setting Standards**

The most critical set of responsibilities for a local board of education is to articulate clearly what success means in its district; establish standards of performance; measure performance against those standards; regularly make this information available to the public; and ensure that this information is used to make good decisions which support student success. Defining standards for success and continually monitoring progress enable schools and school districts to make informed decisions about allocation of resources, curricular priorities and new initiatives that will directly enhance the success of all their students. Schools must constantly build on their accomplishments, while also addressing areas in need of improvement.

### **Measuring Success**

Because success is multifaceted, it must be assessed using multiple measures: academic achievement over an extended period of time; student achievements that are other than academic; unique local indicators that represent community values; and the extent to which the performance gaps between various groups of students (by gender, race, economic status, etc.) are being reduced. The responsibility of measuring success is one shared by local boards of education and the State Board of Education.

There are several sources of data that a local board of education may use to measure the success of its students. The Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) provides statewide, district and regional data on the critical aspects of education that contribute to and measure student performance. These include student test scores; dropout rates; graduate follow-up data; student participation in various courses and programs; expenditures; class size; and number of academic computers per student.

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This information is published on the SDE web page and in publications such as the Strategic School Profiles (SSP), Condition of Education, Special Education in Connecticut, and CMT and CAPT Interpretive Guides. Each district should also use local data such as local assessments and teacher observations; measures of opportunities for students to learn with students from diverse backgrounds; community service work; participation in extracurricular activities; professional development acquired by teachers; parent involvement; and other indicators unique to the environment of the school and community.

### **Cautions**

Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) results provide important information about student performance on a selected set of skills and competencies in mathematics, reading and writing in Grades 4, 6 and 8, and also science in Grade 10. However, these results do not provide a comprehensive picture of student accomplishments. There is a danger that overemphasizing state test scores to evaluate a student's, a school's or a district's performance can result in an inappropriate narrowing of the curriculum and inappropriate classroom instructional practices. Focused preparation for state tests should be a small fraction of a year-long comprehensive curriculum that balances the competencies assessed on the state tests with other critical skills and objectives. Teaching isolated skills for test preparation or using repetitive tasks that go far beyond reasonable practice do not represent good instruction. In addition, no one assessment – state or local – should be the sole basis for promotion, graduation or other important decisions in the education of a student.

### **Reporting Results**

Each local board of education is required by law to annually hold a public discussion with the community on relevant student-related information from its Strategic School Profile. There should also be ongoing communication with the community on the successes and needs of its schools. This can include additional information about students, curriculum, staff, new initiatives and programs, and evaluations of programs' effectiveness. When and where appropriate, the use of technology (e.g., e-mail, school and district web pages, closed-circuit broadcasting) should be used to provide the community with greater access to critical information on and understanding of the district's performance. We encourage local boards of education to communicate frequently and openly with the communities they serve, using every effective means available.

### **Improving Instruction**

Defining standards, measuring success and reporting the results are important steps in the process of improving education. However, the most important step is using this information to make good decisions about adjusting curriculums, improving teaching, designing new programs and providing more specific and more effective instruction for each student.